

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 AID-05 IO-13 INT-05 EB-08 EUR-12

SIL-01 /071 W

-----180216 085810 /66

R 170313Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2741

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY SUVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 WELLINGTON 0624

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, EAID, TN, FJ, WS, NE, CW, NZ, GW, UR

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER TALBOYS' FENCE-MENDING VISIT TO
SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS

REF: (A) 76 WELLINGTON 1667, (B) 76 WELLINGTON 2750

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER TALBOYS HAS JUST COMPLETED AN
ESSENTIALLY FENCE-MENDING VISIT TO THE COOK ISLANDS, FIJI,
WESTERN SAMOA, NIUE AND TONGA, WITH A VIEW TO DEMONSTRATING
CONTINUED NEW ZEALAND INTEREST IN THE WELL-BEING OF THESE
COUNTRIES AND EASING TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE THE THORNY
PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL ISLAND IMMIGRANT WORKERS IN NEW ZEALAND
VISIT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL, BUT
WESTERN SAMOA, IN PARTICULAR, MADE CLEAR IT IS NOT
ENTIRELY RECONCILED TO INSENSITIVE MANNER IN WHICH NEW
ZEALAND IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES HANDLED ILLEGAL WORKERS'
ISSUE. KING OF TONGA SURPRISED TALBOYS WITH STATEMENT
THAT WEST GERMANS WILL BUILD INTERNATIONAL CLASS AIRPORT
AT NUKU ALOFA. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER BRIAN

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TALBOYS RETURNED TO WELLINGTON ON FEBRUARY 12 FROM A
THREE-WEEK GOOD-WILL VISIT TO THE COOK ISLANDS, WESTERN
SAMOA, FIJI, NIUE AND TONGA. MAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS TO
SMOOTH OVER RUFFLED FEELINGS OF ISLANDERS OVER THE SENSITIVE
ISSUE OF ILLEGAL ISLAND WORKERS IN NEW ZEALAND,
REMITTANCES FROM WHOM CONSTITUTE A SUBSTANTIAL SHARE
OF INCOME OF CERTAIN OF THE ISLANDS. TALBOYS WAS

ACCOMPANIED BY DEPUTY SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MERWYN NORRISH WHO PROVIDED EMBASSY WITH RUNDOWN ON VISIT FEBRUARY 15. NORRISH GENERALLY CONFIRMED PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO EFFECT THAT VISIT HAD GONE WELL. TALBOYS HAD DEMONSTRATED IN HIS PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH ISLAND LEADERS THAT HE IS PROBABLY NEW ZEALAND'S MOST TALENTED DIPLOMAT, BEING PARTICULARLY ADEPT AS A SYMPATHETIC LISTENER TO PROBLEMS OF ISLAND LEADERS.

2. NORRISH SAID PERHAPS MOST INTERESTING PART OF TOUR WAS TO NUKU'ALOFA WHERE KING OF TONGA SURPRISED NEW ZEALAND VISITORS WITH ASSERTION THAT WEST GERMANS WOULD BUILD INTERNATIONAL CLASS AIRPORT IN TONGA. NORRISH DOUBTED THAT GERMANS WOULD DO THIS, BUT THOUGHT THEY MIGHT HAVE AGREED TO UPGRADE ONE OR MORE ELEMENTS OF THE PRESENT AIRPORT. BUT GIVEN THE KING'S EBULLIENT DISPOSITION, A PARTIAL UNDERTAKING BY BONN MAY HAVE BEEN TRANSPOSED IN THE KING'S IMAGINATION INTO A GLITTERING INTERNATIONAL CLASS AIRPORT.

3. KING TAUFUA'AHAU TUPOU NOTED TO NEW ZEALAND VISITORS THAT THE SOVIETS HAD THUS FAR NOT RETURNED TO NUKU'ALOFA TO DISCUSS DETAILS ABOUT AN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND OTHER ASSISTANCE THEY HAD OFFERED IN RETURN FOR FISHING AND OTHER FACILITIES IN TONGA. NORRISH INTERPESED LACK OF FOLLOW-UP TO A SOVIET ASSESSMENT THAT THE KING WAS UNLIKELY TO GRANT FACILITIES SOVIETS WANTED. KING ALSO EXPRESSED CONVICTION THAT SOVIET PURPOSE IN SEEKING FISHING FACILITIES IN TONGA WAS NOT FOR TROPICAL

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FISHING BUT RATHER FOR TEMPERATE ZONE FISHING IN NEW ZEALAND/AUSTRALIA AREAS, TO WHICH TONGA WAS REASONABLY CLOSE BY. KING'S VIEW COINCIDED WITH THAT OF NORRISH WHO POINTED TO EARLIER UNSUCCESSFUL SOVIET EFFORTS IN WELLINGTON AND CANBERRA TO OBTAIN FISHING FACILITIES.

4. MAIN PROBLEM TALBOYS ENCOUNTERED IN SUVA WAS PRESSURE FOR INCREASED FIJIAN SUGAR SALES AT HIGHER PRICES TO NEW ZEALAND. TALBOYS REACTED SYMPATHETICALLY WITH NORRISH EXPRESSING HOPE THAT INCREASED SUGAR IMPORTS WOULD COME ABOUT THIS YEAR, AND CERTAINLY NOT LATER THAN NEXT YEAR. HAPPILY FOR FIJI-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS THE OVERSTAYER ISSUE WAS OF ONLY MINIMAL CONCERN DUE TO THE FACT THAT ONLY A FEW FIJIAN WORKERS COME TO NEW ZEALAND.

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SIL-01 /071 W

-----170535Z 073062 /21

R 170313Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2742
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5. SAMOAN PRIME MINISTER TUPUOLA EFI WAS STILL UPSET WITH NEW ZELAND ON THE OVERSTAYERS ISSUE, I.E. THE ILLEGAL PRESENCE IN NEW ZEALAND OF SEVERAL THOUSAND WWESTERN SAMOAN WORKERS WHOSE REMITTANCES TO APIA FIGURE VERY LARGE IN THE WESTERN SAMOAN ECONOMY. EFI'S LINGERING IRRITATION WAS REFLECTED IN A NEW ZEALAND PRESS STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT PERMANENT SCARS HAD BEEN LEFT OVER THE ISSUE. NORRISH DISCLOSED IN CONFIDENCE THAT TALBOYS IN EFFECT HAD ASSURED EFI THAT NO MORE WESTERN SAMOANS WOULD BE DEPORTED AND THAT, IN FACT, VERY FEW HAD BEEN DEPORTED IN THE FIRST PLACE. (COMMENT: ONE OF THE CROSSES NEW ZEALAND DIPLOMACY HAD HAD TO BEAR IS MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION FRANK GILL WHOSE BLUNT OUTCRIES HAVE SERVED MAINLY TO INFLAME AN ALREADY EMOTIONAL ISSUE. ABLE, BUT DIPLOMATICALLY UNSOPHISTICATED, GILL HAS LEFT AN IMPRESSION WITH SOME ISLANDERS THAT HE IS MORE CONCERNED WITH DARK-SKINNED ISLAND OVERSTAYERS THAN HE IS WITH ILLEGAL OVERSTAYERS FROM EUORPE. (END COMMENT). NORRISH INDICATED THAT GILL HAS BEEN LEARNING QUICKLY IN RECENT WEEKS, HOWEVER, AND WILL BE MAKING NO MORE INFLAMATORY PUBLIC STATEMENTS ABOUT OVERSTAYERS. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. NORRISH POINTED OUT THE UNHAPPY FACT THAT

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IS DECLINING IN SEVERAL OF THE ISLAND NATIONS, MOST NOTABLY IN NIUE AND THE COOK ISLANDS. PRIMARY REASON FOR THIS IS THAT THE INHABITANTS OF BOTH SMALL NATIONS, AS NEW ZEALAND CITIZENS, HAVE THE OPTION OF COMING TO NEW ZEALAND IF CONDITIONS ON THE FARM DETERIORATE. BAD LAND TENURE PRACTICES TOGETHER WITH A "COLONIALIST" MENTALITY ADD TO THE PROBLEMS. NEW ZEALAND ADMINISTRATION ALWAYS ACTED AS IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING. MANY FARMERS ACCEPTED THIS VIEW AND SIT ON THEIR HANDS WHEN THEY SHOULD BE HELPING THEMSELVES.

7. FINALLY, NORRISH SAID PERHAPS THE MOST INTRACTABLE PROBLEM WAS THAT OF HELPING THE ISLANDERS REALIZE THEIR ASPIRATIONS OF DEVELOPING MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES TO SUPPLEMENT AGRICULTURE. THE REAL PROBLEM IS ACCESS TO NEW ZEALAND MARKETS FOR ISLAND MANUFACTURED GOODS IN THE FACE OF STRONG PROTECTIONIST SENTIMENT IN NEW ZEALAND. THE SUGGESTION TALBOYS LEFT BEHIND, AND IS TRYING TO ENCOURAGE IN NEW ZEALAND, IS FOR ISLAND AND NEW ZEALAND BUSINESSMEN TO ESTABLISH COMPLEMENTARY MANUFACTURING VENTURES WHEREBY COMPONENTS MANUFACTURED IN THE ISLANDS WILL BE UTILIZED IN NEW ZEALAND TO COMPLETE FINAL MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS. NORRISH THOUGHT THE IDEA WAS FINE BUT CONCEDED THAT THE ACIDE TEST WOULD BE PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE.

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Message Attributes

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Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977WELLIN00624
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 WELLINGTON 1667, 76 WELLINGTON 2750
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3287203
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN MINISTER TALBOYS' FENCE-MENDING VISIT TO SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS
TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, EAID, TN, FJ, WS, NE, CW, NZ, GE, UR, (TALBOYS, BRIAN E)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e6abffc4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009